Company News

RFMD opens epitaxy facility and re-organizes as part of growth strategy

THE opening of a 4500 m^2 epitaxy facility and a comprehensive reorganization into product lines are underlining an extensive growth strategy at RF Micro Devices Inc (RFMD).

When fully operational the epitaxy facility, at RFMD's headquarters in Greensboro, NC, USA, is expected to be the largest MBE fabrication facility in the world. The centre is dedicated to producing epiwafers for GaAs HBT circuits and will have a capacity of several hundred thousand wafers per year when fully utilized. Art Geissberger, vice president of wafer fabrication operations, says the facility will have current generation, multi-wafer MBE systems, as well as next generation higher-volume systems. Planned specifically for MBE fabrication, the centre is designed for continuous operation. Phase I of the facility covers 2600 m^2, with the first MBE reactor scheduled for installation by the beginning of July 1999.

The transfer of the MBE process to a dedicated facility will create additional space at RFMD's wafer fab, contributing to on-going efforts to increase its production capacity to 50 000 wafers per year. This is expected to occur by the spring of 2001.

Another important part of RFMD's growth strategy is its reorganization into four product groups – Digital Cellular, Power Amplifier Products, Silicon Systems and Custom Products. The company says the initiative comes in direct response to its customers' demand for design engineering efficiency and greater speed-to-market. RFMD will run its entire range of product development functions within the product line organizations, creating innovative products using GaAs HBT, GaAs MESFET, Si BiCMOS, and SiGe technologies for global wireless communication applications. 'Each of the four product line organizations will contain essential functions for product development, including design engineering, marketing, applications engineering, product engineering, production and inventory control, and financial management. The directors of the four product line organizations have been promoted from within the company.

Other recent developments at RFMD have seen the company triple its production test capacity with a move to expanded facilities, open a 450 m^2 design centre in Cedar Rapids, IA, USA and receive orders from its first major customer in mainland China (Beijing Xinweit Telecom Technology Co).

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Conference News

MBE-GPT '99 lights up Warsaw

RESEARCHERS from 13 countries enjoyed the '3rd International Workshop on MBE Growth Physics and Technology (MBE-GPT '99)' held in Warsaw, 23-28 May 1999. A feature of the meeting was the large proportion of eminent speakers, who gave no less than 30 invited presentations on the wide range of semiconductor, magnetic and insulator material systems currently being researched using MBE.

Although III-V materials were strongly in evidence there was substantial time devoted to the II-VIs, SiGe and the alkali halides. What was clear is that MBE and its variants (including surfactant-assisted and plasma-assisted growth) are playing a pivotal role in researching the intriguing influences of reduced dimensionality on the electrical, optical and magnetic properties of these materials. Although thin layer-by-layer blanket growth on (100) substrates is still challenging enough, what is exciting scientists worldwide is the ability to exploit so-called self-organized (MBE) growth processes on vicinal and/or patterned substrates to produce nanostructure arrays, thereby avoiding complex nano-fabrication processes.

The proceedings of the meeting, organized by Professor Marian A. Herman of the Institute of Physics, Polish Academy of Sciences, will be published in *Thin Solid Films* in 2000.

Prof. Evan Parker (University of Warwick, UK).